

IMPROVING READING ABILITY THROUGH GROUP WORK ACTIVITIES OF THE THIRD YEARS STUDENTS AT SMP NEGERI 13 KOTA BENGKULU IN ACADEMIC YEAR 1996 / 1997

Zarawin

SMPN 15 Bengkulu City
Zarawin15@gmail.com

Abstract

This study deals with the use of group work activities in order to improve reading ability of the third years student at SMP Negeri 13 Kota Bengkulu academic year 1996 / 1997. The main purpose of the study was to find out 1) the student achievement in reading ability through group work activities. 2) whether or not group work activities technique is effective in improving reading ability.

The population of this study was four classes of the third year students. From the four classes the writer took two classes of 25 students were taken randomly so the sample consist of 50 student. In doing his research the writer did the experiment, the writer divided the sample students into the groups. Group A (experimental Group) and group B (control group) both of these group were given pre – test and post test . the post test was given after the teaching experiment. In analyzing data the writer used t – test to compare before and after treatment.

The result of this study showed that there was a progress made by group A (experimental group) with the gain $t = 5.34$ while group B (control group) got 1.67 the value of t – table of $df=24$ was 1.74. since the value of the gained t was higher than the value of t – table this means that the group work activities can be proved effectively.

Beside that, the writer also found that there was a significant difference between group A (experimental group) and group B (control group). The value of gained t was 4.02 while the value of t – table of $df = 24$ is 2.06. it means that $4.02 > 2.06$ so the second hypothesis is retained.

Keywords ; the third years students, in academic year

A. Introduction

When we learn language we are supposed to master the four of its skills, they are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Among the four skills, reading is very dominating in teaching and learning process at SMP. Almost 75% of the final test belongs to reading. Reading involve the understanding of the main and supporting ideas of written language. Listening is concerned with the understanding of spoken language. Speaking is concerned with the uses of language orally. Writing refers to the ability to express oneself in written form.

Bond (1975:5) stated that reading is the ability to recognize the printed or written symbol which serve as stimuli to the recall or meaning built up through the reader's past experience. What the writer means by reading here is reading comprehension that means the ability of reading something with comprehension

According to Gunning (1992 : 188) comprehension is constructive, interactive process involving three factors. The reader, the text and the context in which the text is read. Comprehension is the main purpose of reading since reading is the process of constructing meaning from printed words or expressions. Therefore the writer concludes that comprehension is a basic ability in all reading. Harris (1970:9) claims in his book that the ability in reading comprehension can be divided into the ability to find answer to

the specific questions. To select and understand main ideas. To note and to details. To grasp the organization of the author's plan, and to evaluate what one reads.

Harris also claim that reading ability within class varies so much from one to another (1970:119). Therefore , if reading become a group activity, the students can share their abilities. In other words. They can interact, cooperate, and make comparison or contrast in reading comprehension (see cooper et al,, 1979:241)

Moreover. Goodman (1970) cited in Cheek (1989 : 18) emphasizes that
Reading is a sampling, selecting, predicting, comparing, and confirming activity in which the reader selects a sample of useful generic cues based on what he sees and what he expects to see ...(and) The reader attempts to reconstruct a message from the writer.

According to Harris (1970: 115) grouping children for reading is not an end in itself but a means for achieving desirable objectives of learning and adjustment. Nation (1989 : 20) states that in many group works activities learners have equal access to the same material or information and cooperate to do the task. And group works provide more opportunities in term of individualization, motivation, depth of processing , and effective climate, furthermore according to Brown Norberg and Srigley (1972 : 150), students need to do part of their work in small group, they like to help one another, discuss ideas found in their reading, and work in group projects. In addition. Mc. Whorter (1989 : 259) point out that group projects are intended to enable students to learn one another by viewing each other's thinking process and evaluating each other's idea and approaches

Based on the statement above it is suitable to improve reading ability through group work activities.

According to Gunning (1992 : 428) in reading groups teacher tend to give additional work book assignment to the students for whom they have low expectations. Group in reading should always be kept flexible, changes being made from group to group in order to meet the need of the students. On the other hand, a student must be given a challenging material of reading in order the students make their best effort in improving their reading ability (Brown et al 1951 :166-167) in group work activities, students are free to ask question or make comments on the information presented by an individual or group. The teacher involves all students as much as possible, even those who seem to be the weakest and the most passive in a teaching setting. Rubin (1987 : 46) informs that the groups were packed with strong and weak to avoid the possibility of one group performing on a visibly lower or higher level than the other , and also try to avoid putting " buddies " in the same group and to cut down on the distractions.

The educational benefits of work groups have been fairly well documented. For example the cooperation required in group activities appears to lead students to work harder and to discover more than what they do when tasks performed on an individual, and competitive. (Deawford and Halland, 1972) William and Snipper (1990 : 119) also gives several pedagogical benefit which has been linked to these sort of classroom environment.

First students accept more responsibility for their success and achievement because they are more in control of their work. Work group also encourage cooperative problem solving that can enhance critical thinking skill. Having students work in class, allows teacher to move freely about the room to offer advice on papers that are still in a draft form. Students can use this advice immediately to improve their work, modifying language behavior during the composing process when it is most beneficial.

In addition, Garibaldi (1979) cited in Snipper (1990), state that work in groups seems to have positive effect on motivation, students who are not strongly motivated to perform will be encouraged by those who have strong motivation and for all students the level of motivation seem to remain higher when they participate in group work.

There are some reason the encourage the writer to chose this topic. First , reading is one of the components of English which is taught at school. Second writer thinks that the technique can be used to improve reading ability and the group work activities discussed in this study will help the English teachers better improve

1.2. Problem

Based on the statement above, there are two questions that this study is trying to answer. First, how well that the students reading ability improved through group work activities ? second, is group work activities effective in improving reading ability?

1.3. Objectives

The objectives of this study is to find out 1) the students achievement in reading through group work activities, and 2) whether group work activities is effective or not in improving reading ability

1.4. Significances

The benefit of this study are 1). To make the students participate fully and more active in learning process through group work activities. 2) to offer teachers alternative technique in teaching reading. 3) to gain more knowledge and experience for teachers

1.5. Hypothesis

In relation to the problems and the objective of the study. The writer proposes the hypothesis as the following :

Hypothesis 1 : group work activities are more effective than the conventional method

Hypothesis 2 : there is a significant differences between the students reading comprehension performance who work in group and that of those who don't

B. Findings

In analyzing the data. The writer first calculated the mean scores of pre - test and the mean scores of post – test. The writer applied t – test formula to each group to see whether or not the group made progress then the result of the test was compared to know which group made better improve

Second the writer calculated the mean of the scores of pre – test and post - test in group A and the mean of the scores of pre – test and post test in group B. After that two mean of these group were compared to see the significant differences of the students scores. To know the result the writer also used t – test formula. Then the writer found t – statistic and compared it with the value of t- table. If the result of t – test is higher than the value of t – table. It mean that the research hypothesis (H2) is retained.

The following formula was t- test which applied in this study :

$$t = \frac{M1 - M2}{\sqrt{\frac{S^2_1}{N1} + \frac{S^2_2}{N2}}}$$

In which

t : the value which statistical significance of the mean difference will be judge

M2 : the mean score between post test and pre – test in group B

S¹ 2 : the variance scores between post - test and the pre – test in group A

S² 2 : the variance scores between post - test and the pre – test in group B

N1 : the number of subjects in group A

N2 : the number of subjects in group B

1. Data distribution

The data collected from the free - test and post - test were classified into two group. Group A experimental group. It consists of pre - test and post - test of the students who learn reading by using group work activities and the group B (control group) consists of the score of pre – test and post - test of the students who learn by using conventional method the four table below present the scores the scores distribution of pre – test and post – test of each group

TABLE 1. THE SCORE DISTRIBUTION OF THE PRE- TEST OF GROUP A IN READING COMPREHENSION

CLASS INTERVAL	FREQUENCY	PRECENTAGE
91 – 100	0	0%
81 – 91	0	0%
71 – 80	4	16%
61 – 70	15	60%
– 60	6	24%

In which :

91 – 100	: excellent
81 – 90	: above average
71 – 80	: average
61 – 70	: below average

- 60 : insufficient

TABLE 2. THE SCORE DISTRIBUTION OF THE PRE- TEST OF GROUP B IN READING COMPREHENSION

CLASS INTERVAL	FREQUENCY	PRECENTAGE
91 – 100	0	0 %
81 – 91	0	0 %
71 – 80	3	12 %
61 – 70	8	32 %
– 60	14	56 %

In which : 91 – 100 : excellent
 81 – 90 : above average
 71 – 80 : average
 61 – 70 : below average
 60 : insufficient

Based on the two tables above we can conclude that the students reading ability of both group are still low only a few of them get the average score

TABLE 3. THE SCORE DISTRIBUTION OF THE POST - TEST OF GROUP A IN READING COMPREHENSION

CLASS INTERVAL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
91 – 100	2	8 %
81 – 91	3	12 %
71 – 80	12	48 %
61 – 70	8	32 %
– 60	0	0 %

In which : 91 – 100 : excellent
 81 – 90 : above average
 71 – 80 : average
 61 – 70 : below average
 60 : insufficient

From the table above we can see that most of them got the scores above 70% and none of them got below 60

TABLE 4. THE SCORE DISTRIBUTION OF THE POST - TEST OF GROUP B IN READING COMPREHENSION

CLASS INTERVAL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
91 – 100	0	0 %
81 – 91	0	0 %
71 – 80	8	32 %
61 – 70	9	36 %
– 60	8	32 %

In which : 91 – 100 : excellent
 81 – 90 : above average
 71 – 80 : average
 61 – 70 : below average
 60 : insufficient

Based on the data distribution above we can see that the students performance in group A in reading comprehension after applying group work activities was higher than their performance before applying group work activities. In contrast the students performance in group B in reading comprehension before and after applying the

conventional method was still low (see table 2 and 4). This means that the students did not make any progress at all after they learn reading comprehension by using conventional method.

2. Statistical analysis

Having classified the data from pre – test and post – test Of the two groups, t – test was used or applied to see whether there is a progress of each group and the effectiveness of group work activities. Beside that, t – test was used to find out the significant difference between the two groups.

2.1 The progress Analysis of group A and B

To know whether the analysis was retained or not . the writer used t – test formula to find out which of the two groups made higher progress.

The following table presents the data of pre – test and post - test score

TABLE 5. THE DATA OF THE PRE – TEST AND POST – TEST OF GROUP A (n = 25) IN READING COMPREHENSION

GROUP A	
PRE - TEST	POST TEST
$\sum x_2 = 1580$	$\sum x_1 = 1870$
$M_2 = 63,2$	$M_1 = 74,8$
$S^2_2 = 50,33$	$S^1_2 = 67,66$

In which :

- $\sum x_1$: the sum score of post - test in group A
- $\sum x_2$: the sum score of pre - test in group A
- M_1 : the mean score of post - test in group A
- M_2 : the mean score of pre - test in group A
- S^1_2 : the variance of post - test scores in group A
- S^2_2 : the variance of pre - test scores in group A
- N : the number of subject

From the statistic analysis score the value og gained t1 (data analysis of group A) is 5,34 where I the value of t – table is 1.17at the significant level = 0.05 and df = 24 for one tailed test. It means that the student in group A got better scores in the post - test compare with their scores in the pre – test

After analyzing the data in group A the writer also analyze the data in group B. Based on the analysis , it is found that the value of gained t2 (data analysis in group B) is 1.67 in the level of 0,05 = 1.71the gained t is not statistically significant because $t_2 = 1.67 < t - \text{table} (1.71)$ the following table (table 5) lists the data of the pre - test and post - test in group B

TABLE 6. THE DATA OF THE PRE – TEST AND POST – TEST OF GROUP B (n = 25) IN READING COMPREHENSION

GROUP A	
PRE - TEST	POST TEST
$\sum x_2 = 1528$	$\sum x_1 = 1634$
$M_2 = 61,12$	$M_1 = 65, 36$
$S^2_2 = 85,02$	$S^1_2 = 76,90$

In which :

- $\sum x_1$: the sum score of post - test in group B
- $\sum x_2$: the sum score of pre - test in group B
- M1 : the mean score of post - test in group B
- M2 : the mean score of pre - test in group B
- S^2_1 : the variance of post - test scores in group B
- S^2_2 : the variance of pre - test scores in group B
- N : the number of subject

Based on the data above. It can be concluded that the significant change which was made by the students in group A was so high. It can be seen from the analysis of the t – test formula the gain of group A (t1) is 5.34 while the gain of t of group B (t2) is 1.67. From this result we can draw the conclusion the students who were taught by the group work activities had made progress in reading comprehension. In other words group work activities can be proved effective

2.2 The effectiveness of group work activities

From the progress analysis of group A and group B it was found that t1 was 5.34 t scores statistic t2 was 1.67. in other words t1 (5.34) was higher than t – table value (1.72). Since the computed t score statistic was higher than value of the t table this means that the first hypothesis is retained

1.3 The significant difference between the two means of scores from group A and B

After knowing that there was progress between group A and B the writer also used t-test to know the significant difference between two groups the following table presents the data of two tests (pre – test and post - test)

TABLE 7. THE DATA OF THE PRE – TEST AND POST – TEST OF GROUP A (n = 25) and B (n = 25) IN READING COMPREHENSION

GROUP A	
PRE - TEST	POST TEST
$\sum x_1 = 290$	$\sum x_2 = 106$
M1 = 11.6	M2 = 4.24
$S^2_1 = 22$	$S^2_2 = 61.77$

In which :

- $\sum x_1$: the sum of difference in scores between post - test and pre - test in group A
- $\sum x_2$: the sum of difference in scores between post - test and pre - test in group B
- M1 : the mean score between post test and pre – test in group A
- M2 : the mean score between post test and pre – test in group B
- S^2_1 : the variance scores between post - test and the pre – test in group A
- S^2_2 : the variance scores between post - test and the pre – test in group B
- N1 : the number of subjects in group A
- N2 : the number of subjects in group B

After calculating the data above into t – test formula the value of gained t3 (data analysis group A and group B) is 4.02 for two tailed test $\alpha = 0.05$ and $df = 24$ the t – table value is 2.064 since the value of the gained t is higher than the value of

$t - \text{table } 0r\ 4.02 > 2.064$. the second hypothesis is retained. In other words, the reading comprehension performance of SMP Negeri 13 Kota Bengkulu who were taught by using group work activities was higher than those who were taught by using group work activities was higher than those who were taught by using the conventional one.

C. Discussion

Based on the result of the study it can be said that the group works activities could improve students' reading ability.

The writer had prepared the readiness by giving stimulation in reading activities the situation in group work activities was very useful for the students to exchange their opinion, express their idea in order to solve their problems in comprehending reading materials so that there was a problem solving activity in which the students were able to know and to comprehend what the author meant. Indirectly, this activity could improve students performance especially for those who had low motivation in reading. Sprinthal and Sprinthal (1990 : 512) suggested that working in group can increase feeling of competition and anxiety, a student's performance will be motivated by their own group.

In addition, the writer also tried to find the students weaknesses in comprehending the reading materials. Students who have low reading comprehension level who could not make any adaptation with their group members who had high level would be helped by their group. Here, the group work activities could solve this problems because this method encourage the students to interact and share each other. This is one of the goals in group work activities where the students can help each other

Teaching reading through group work activities need a little bit time to manage the class, the students and the material preparation. Beside that the teacher should also make a good planning. The planning is claimed helped teacher or guided him / her in determining the right strategies, by doing this activity the teacher can help students to find their needs, interest based on their reading purpose.

D. Conclusion

Based on the simple experiment in teaching reading comprehension by using group work activities. It is known that the students who learned reading comprehension through group work activities obtained better scores in term of reading comprehension than those who were taught by using conventional method. It can be seen from the finding of the test and the difference between the two mean of the score (group A and group B). Moreover, it can be found that the students who were taught by using group work activities had better improved. In contrast the students who taught by using conventional method had low improvement in reading ability. It can be proved that this reading method is considered more effective than the conventional one.

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